

Couch - used by Lincoln

Drawer Z9a

Furniture

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Curios and Relics

Furniture

Couch

Used by Lincoln

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

INCORPORATED 1846

THE AMERICAN INSURANCE COMPANY

Newark, N.J.

FIRE INSURANCE AND KINDRED LINES

WESTERN DEPARTMENT, ROCKFORD, ILL.
CHARLES N. GORHAM, MANAGER

VINCENNES, IND.

March 26th, 1932

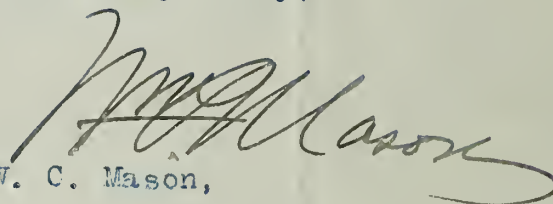
WM. C. MASON, AGENT
217 LA PLANTE BUILDING

Dr. Louis A. Warren
Fort Wayne, Indiana.
Dear Sir:-

Hearing that you were wanting some Lincoln relics, I have some two old divans and other furniture which Lincoln occupied from time to time when in his political campaign passed through or visited this city.

If interested, in these things please advise me by early mail.

Yours very truly,


W. C. Mason,

WCM:RLC

With everything AMERICAN, tomorrow is secure

April 5, 1932

W. C. Mason
217 La Plante Bldg.
Vincennes, Ind.

Dear Mr. Mason:

Dr. Warren has instructed me to inform you that our display space being limited, we have excluded furniture from our plans, not having room to properly exhibit it.

We are enclosing some museum literature which may interest you, and we wish to thank you for your courtesy and kindness in informing us of this item.

Yours sincerely,

Ethel Honeford
Assistant Director

Lincoln Historical Research Foundation

EVH/h

**Suburban Chicago
Newspapers**



Beacon News

Courier News

Herald News

Naperville Sun

News Sun

Sun Publications

GET HOME
DELIVERY

Possible Lincoln courting couch, chair on display

By Adriana Colindres The (Springfield) State Journal-Register

SPRINGFIELD — An abundant supply of bachelors in 19th century Springfield motivated Elizabeth Todd Edwards to invite her unmarried sisters, including the future bride of Abraham Lincoln, for frequent visits to the Edwards home on Aristocracy Hill.

Before she married Ninian Wirt Edwards and moved to Springfield, Elizabeth had lived with her family in Lexington, Ky.

"Now, in Lexington, Kentucky, there were many more eligible young women than young men, and (in) Springfield, it was the exact reverse," said Thomas Schwartz, interim executive director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. "So it was a strategy on Elizabeth's part to find proper husbands for her (three) sisters. And indeed, every one married a Springfieldian."

Mary Todd met Lincoln at a dance in the Edwards home. They courted and eventually married there in 1842.

A couch and chair that once adorned the Edwards home is on public display at the Lincoln-Herndon Law Offices State Historic Site at Sixth and Adams streets.

The recently restored furniture will be on display through Labor Day at the Lincoln-Herndon offices and will be exhibited later at other historic sites, including the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum.

Lincoln 'likely' sat there

Schwartz said that while no evidence proves Lincoln and his future wife ever sat in the furniture, they almost certainly did.

"I think if we were betting people, it'd be a good bet," he said. "It's something that we assume and something that, just understanding how people behave and the purpose of these furnishings, it's a likely bet."

The couch, more than 7 feet long, and the matching chair, almost 4 feet tall, have rosewood frames and are covered in black horsehair fabric. The wooden legs are embellished with ornate carvings.

The well-built, "high-end" furniture was "very expensive in its day," said Malcolm Brown, exhibits curator of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

Brown spent more than a year repairing and restoring the furniture. The chair was in relatively good condition when he first saw it, but the sofa needed a lot of work. "It looked OK from the top side," he said. "But once you flipped it over, or once you grabbed an arm and moved an arm, you realized that it was very fragile."

Brown performed most of the restoration work from the underside of the couch. "The large part of my project was not to disturb the horsehair, not to remove it at all, because it's so expensive and it's in great condition, and once you take it off, you can't put it back on like it was," he said.

Edwards home a 'magnet'

Springfield physician Gershom Greening donated the couch and chair to the state in late 2004. He had bought them, along with a Mary Todd Lincoln shawl, from Anna Pitzer in 1968. She had bought the items 50 years earlier, when the Edwards home was demolished to clear the way for what is now the Michael J. Howlett Building on Edwards Street.

Schwartz said the furnishings reflect the wealth and social prominence of the Edwardses. Ninian Wirt Edwards, a member of the legislature, invited fellow lawmakers to his home, and Elizabeth Todd Edwards hosted balls and tea parties as she played matchmaker for her sisters.

"The Edwards home was really this magnet, kind of this incubator for relationships for all of the Todd girls," he said.

Elizabeth did not select specific men to court her sisters, Schwartz said.

"Rather, what she did is she would have a party," he said. "All of the likely candidates, the choices, would show up, and she would leave it to her sisters to see if any of them were suitable for eternal bliss."

"We're very happy to have this (furniture) because it shows the importance of the Edwards family and the connection to the Lincoln story," he said. "It's really through Elizabeth Todd Edwards that Mary would even come to meet her future husband."

- *Via The Associated Press.*

08/13/06

Lincoln didn't sleep here

Thursday, Oct. 14, 2010 09:30 pm

illinoistimes.com

Setting the record straight on Abraham Lincoln's ties to Edwards Place

By Erika Holst

No, Lincoln didn't sleep here. And, in the case of Edwards Place, the Springfield Art Association's antebellum Italianate mansion, Lincoln didn't court here. Abraham Lincoln actually called on Mary Todd at the home of her brother-in-law, Ninian W. Edwards, and married her there on Nov. 4, 1842. That house used to stand on South Second Street before it was torn down in 1918 to make way for the building later named the Howlett Building.



The big pink house on North Fourth Street that now bears the name Edwards Place was the home of Ninian's brother, Benjamin. And while it might not be the place where Lincoln courted Mary Todd, it does contain the sofa on which they sat during their courtship. Dubbed the "courting couch," it belonged to Ninian and Elizabeth Edwards and was one of a pair that stood in their double parlors when Abraham Lincoln came to call. The courting couch is just one attraction of a house that has a rich and interesting

history—including ties to Abraham Lincoln—all its own.

Edwards Place holds the distinction of being the oldest house in Springfield on its original foundation. It was built in 1833 for Dr. Thomas Houghan. In 1843, Houghan sold the story-and-a-half brick house and 15 acres to Benjamin Edwards for \$4,000. Benjamin made a \$50,000 renovation to the house around 1857, enlarging it to its present 15 rooms.

Benjamin came from a prominent family. His father, Ninian, was territorial governor, senator, and governor of Illinois. His older brother, Albert Gallatin, was a merchant in St. Louis who went on to found the brokerage firm of A. G. Edwards. And his oldest brother, Ninian W., was a state politician and Springfield's social leader.

It was through his brother Ninian that Benjamin and Helen Edwards first met Mary Todd. Helen later recalled, "She greeted me with such warmth of manner...saying she knew we would be great friends and I must call her Mary. This bond of friendship was continued to the end of her life."



That bond only grew tighter when Mary married Abraham Lincoln. Benjamin and Helen Edwards were among the small number of guests who attended the Lincoln wedding, and Helen was one of the women who helped then seven-months-pregnant Elizabeth Todd Edwards prepare the wedding supper for her sister, Mary.

To modern eyes, Abraham Lincoln and Benjamin Edwards were only distantly connected through marriage: Lincoln's wife's sister was married to Benjamin's brother. Yet in Lincoln's view, according to his friend David Davis, "Ben was in the family."

Benjamin and Lincoln moved in the same professional circles. Benjamin, like Lincoln, was an attorney. In 1843 he formed a partnership with John T. Stuart, who had been Lincoln's partner until 1841. Lincoln and Benjamin would meet in the courtroom on more than 400 occasions, either as co-counsel or opposing attorneys. Both served as defense attorneys during the Anderson murder trial, made famous in Julie Fenster's *The Case of Abraham Lincoln: A Story of Adultery, Murder, and the Making of a Great President*.

The Edwardses and Lincolns also moved in the same social circles and were almost certainly guests at each other's houses. Both families were known to host parties during the winter when the legislature was in session, Springfield's high social season. Among the invitations received by Springfield's prominent families in February of 1857 were one in Benjamin's hand that read "Mr & Mrs. B. S. Edwards will be pleased to see you on Wedn: Eve. Feb. 4 1857 at 8 o'clock" and one in Lincoln's hand that read "Mr. & Mrs. Lincoln will be pleased to see you Thursday evening Feb. 5. at 8. o'clock." The Edwardses and Lincolns likely went to each other's parties; a few weeks later Mary Lincoln wrote to her sister, "Within the last three weeks, there has been a party, almost every night."

The one area where Lincoln and Edwards did not see eye to eye was politics. Although both men were Whigs until the party dissolved in the mid-1850s, Lincoln then cast his lot with the Republicans, and Edwards became a Democrat. During the 1858 contest for Senate, Stephen A. Douglas held a political rally at Edwards Place, while Lincoln addressed his own supporters later that day in the Capitol Building.

Today Edwards Place is open to the public Tuesdays – Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., with tours being offered on the hour. The house interprets mid-to-upper-class social and domestic life of 19th century Springfield, giving a window into the lifestyle that Lincoln aspired to and eventually attained. Visitors will see the parlors where Lincoln and other important men of his time were entertained; portraits of prominent 19th century Springfield citizens; a collection of stunning antique furnishings with ties to Springfield's best-known early families, and, of course, the courting couch.

Erika Holst is curator of collections for the Springfield Art Association and author of Wicked Springfield: Crime, Corruption & Scandal During the Lincoln Era.



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Edwards Place's interior to be renovated


By CHRIS DETTRO

THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Posted Jun 29, 2011 @ 10:56 PM

Last update Jun 30, 2011 @ 06:26 AM

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Edwards Place, the 178-year-old building that has housed the Springfield Art Association since 1914, will be taking on a new interior look — actually an old interior look — in conjunction with the association's centennial that begins next year.

Art association members and historical preservationists earlier this week heard recommendations from Anne Sullivan, principal of **Sullivan Preservation** in Chicago, on how to restore the inside of the home at 700 N. Fourth St. to its mid-1800s appearance.

Edwards Place is the oldest home in Springfield on its original foundation. Once a center of social activity in Springfield, the home saw prominent citizens and politicians such as Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas entertained at lavish dinner parties, while the grounds played host to many summer picnics and political rallies.

Sullivan and her team were commissioned by the art association to create a framework for future restoration of Edwards Place to a historically appropriate appearance, said Erika Holst, curator of collections for the art association.

Sullivan put the total cost of renovation at around \$700,000, and Holst said the association will begin fundraising in conjunction with the centennial.

"A capital campaign will start with the centennial," she said. "Our target is to do it room by room."

She said Sullivan recommended the entryway be the first area restored because that's the first thing people see when they come into the house.

Edwards Place has 10 rooms and two hallway areas — one on each floor, Holst said.

Because of the many layers of history encompassed by Edwards Place since its construction in 1833, Sullivan recommended a broad era of interpretation.

The years from 1858 to 1876 were chosen in order to interpret the social connections between the Edwards and Lincoln families while capturing the alterations made to the home up to 1887, Holst said.

"The bulk of her presentation was presenting wallpaper, carpeting and interior wood finish samples," Holst said. A furniture layout and a conservation plan for the furnishings also were part of the study.

Holst said Sullivan's recommendations are largely for Rococo Revival designs, a style characterized by naturalistic motifs, asymmetry and light, fanciful designs.

"It's an appropriate choice based on what was known to be popular in Springfield in the mid-19th century and also based on what is known of Edwards family furniture and wallpaper selections," Holst said. Lincoln favored the same style in his own home.

Holst said Sullivan made an exception for the library by suggesting a Gothic Revival pattern that was typical of male, scholarly environments such as home libraries.

Sullivan also recommend committing space within the house — in the southeast bedroom, which has remained largely unchanged since the 1960s — to feature the Springfield Art Association and its development over the last century.

The home is furnished with Victorian furniture, including many pieces that belonged to the Edwards family. It also contains the "Lincoln Courting Couch" from the parlor of the Ninian Edwards home where Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd were married.

The study was funded by a \$20,000 grant from the Jeffris Heartland Fund, administered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and matched by the art association.

In addition to Sullivan, the team doing the study consisted of historic-finishes specialist Robert Fitzgerald, who analyzed paint and wallpaper layers; and Craig Deller, a conservator who prepared condition reports and made suggestions for appropriate furniture use.

Preservation expert's report

Preservation expert Anne Sullivan in her report broke down the history of Edwards Place into six eras:

* The Pre-Edwards Era, 1833-43. Edwards Place would have been one of the first brick dwellings in Springfield and was occupied

by Dr. Thomas Houghan. The house represented Springfield's transition from a rural frontier community to a modern urban community.

* The First Edwards Era, 1843-58. Benjamin Edwards and his family would occupy the house for more than 60 years. Within a few years of moving in, Edwards put on a significant addition that likely included a kitchen as well as the four rooms on the east side of the house. This expansion reflected his status as a member of Springfield's social and professional elite.

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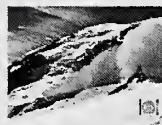
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Edwards Place's interior to be renovated

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David Spencer/The State Journal-Register

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Fritz Klein of Springfield recounts a story for visitors Wednesday, June 29, 2011, outside Edwards Place while portraying Abraham Lincoln in 1860. Lincoln was a frequent visitor to the home, owned by his in-laws, Benjamin and Helen Edwards. The event, Coffee and Tea With Mr. Lincoln, featured lemonade to suit a summer afternoon and is part of the History Comes Alive program. David Spencer/The State Journal-Register



By **CHRIS DETTRO**
THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Posted Jun 29, 2011 @ 10:56 PM

Last update Jun 30, 2011 @ 06:26 AM

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